



U.S. House of Representatives
750 Anderson St. Ste. B
Vancouver, WA 98661



Washington State Legislature
Legislative Building
Olympia, WA 98504

Governor Kate Brown
Office of the Governor
900 Court Street NE, Suite 254
Salem, OR 97301

Mr. David Gerstenfeld
Interim Director - Oregon
Employment Department
875 Union Street, NE
Salem, OR 97311

August 25, 2020

Dear Governor Brown and Interim Director Gerstenfeld,

We are requesting urgent assistance in getting COVID-related relief to Washington state residents who worked in Oregon for at least part of their base year. Specifically, a significant number of these individuals who we represent have yet to receive unemployment benefits. We are requesting that you detail the steps the Oregon Employment Department (OED) is taking to ensure their claims are processed in a timely and fair manner.

We recognize that OED was given a large task in implementing expanded unemployment benefits approved by Congress through the *CARES Act* in March. However, five months after that bill was signed into law, our offices continue to be contacted regularly by constituents unable to even speak to someone at OED, let alone have their claim processed. This lack of responsiveness and failure to distribute benefits is resulting in medications forgone, rent payments missed and other essential needs being unmet.

Many Southwest Washington residents have waited months to receive a response from OED. When they finally do receive a response, they often find out that their claims were denied or that they need to provide additional documentation, which typically translates to further significant delays in accessing their unemployment benefits. Our offices have attempted to contact OED to escalate some of the most desperate cases – but we have yet to receive a response. This limbo is untenable for the individuals who worked, paid taxes, and are now trying to access critical resources that Congress made available five months ago.

We urge OED and the Governor's office to consider creating a channel for local, state, and federal offices in Washington state to escalate claims directly to OED for Washington residents who are owed assistance from Oregon.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this pressing matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



U.S. Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler,
3rd Congressional District



Sen. Lynda Wilson, 17th Legislative District



Sen. Ann Rivers, 18th Legislative District



Rep. Paul Harris, 17th Legislative District



Rep. Brandon Vick, 18th Legislative District



Rep. Larry Hoff, 18th Legislative District



Rep. Sharon Wylie, 49th Legislative District